



## TESTIMONY

Submitted by Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO  
The Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home

### **Appropriations Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed FY 23 Budget Adjustments for Human Services Agencies**

**February 23, 2022**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO of the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home. I am also an RN with nearly 40 years' experience.

The CT Association for Healthcare at Home is the united voice for our licensed home health and hospice agencies as well as several non-medical Homemaker-Companion Agencies. Together, our members provide services that foster cost-effective home care for Connecticut's Medicaid population in the setting they prefer most – their own homes.

I'm testifying before you today to ask for additional funding in the State Budget to focus on both immediate workforce development as well as long term commitment to agencies who provide home and community-based care in our ever-growing aging state. Our providers have a unique role in healthcare as they do not work in institutions. They go into people's homes **alone** not knowing what is behind the closed doors. They face multiple risks regularly including drugs, guns, abuse, neglect, and yes, COVID where many family members may choose not to mask up. Yet, in 2017, the add-on rates to help mitigate some of these risks were eliminated. In addition, in 2016, the home health Behavioral Health Medication Administration rate was cut by 15%!

The recent ARPA funding made available to both home health and non-medical home care is genuinely welcomed yet doesn't begin to make up for **15 years of flat funding** combined with the added COVID costs and inflationary impact. Of course, it didn't help that our institutional providers (hospitals and nursing homes) received additional funding long before we did which put us at a significant competitive disadvantage. During the pandemic, our providers have lost up to 20% of our staff to those providers who were able to offer far more competitive wages.

Regarding complex care services for the medically fragile living in the community, last year's budget added a 1.7% increase for pediatric complex care and the ARPA funding added another 30% for the same age group. This created a 31.7% gap in this vital level care between the 0-18 age group and the adults (19 and older). These are cases requiring the same staff and the same care. Why discriminate when a person turns 19 in the community yet still requires the same care when they were 18?

The overall result of all these cuts, lack of adequate funding and disparities?...Greatly reduced staffing, resulting in fewer Medicaid cases served in the community, less revenue for the providers keeping them from hiring and retaining staff and higher costs of care for the state...a vicious, unnecessary cycle.

Additionally, with the growing needs of the community, Social Workers serve a key role within the Home Health Agency as they assist patients with community resources including Medicaid and waiver



services, address mental health challenges, and support the psychosocial/emotional needs of those with serious illness. However, Medicaid does not pay for home health Social Work services.

Here are our specific asks:

- Consistent annual provider rate increases to account for COLA and inflation
- A 10.5% increase in the Behavioral Health Medication Administration rate
- A 27.2% increase in the Adult Complex Care rate to align with the 31.7% increase for Pediatric Complex Care
- Re-instate the Add-on rates taken away in 2017
- Develop a Home Health Social Work rate to address and support the Social Determinants of Health, which in turn, will help to keep people in the community

The underfunding of much needed, cost-effective Medicaid Home Care services must stop or there will be no one to care for the tens of thousands of people who want to receive care in their homes. We urge you to invest in this much needed and desired level of care.

Thank you!

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